

## REMARKS

The last Office Action has been carefully considered.

It is noted that Claims 1, 6, 7 and 9-13 are rejected under 35 USC 102(b) over the U.S. patent to Howland.

Claims 1, 7, 9-17 are rejected under 35 USC 102(b) over the U.S. patent to Kodaira et al.

The claims are objected to and rejected under 35 USC 112, and the drawings are objected to as well.

In connection with the Examiner's formal objections and rejections, applicants amended the corresponding claims and submitted a new figure of the drawings with a proposed correction. It is therefore believed that the Examiner's grounds for formal objections and rejections are therefore eliminated.

The Examiner's indication of the allowability of claims 2, 3 and 8 has been gratefully acknowledged. In connection with this, claim 1 has been amended by incorporating into it the features of claim 2. Claim 1 should now be considered as being in allowable condition.

Claims 2 and 8 have been amended by incorporating into them the features of original claim 1, and therefore they are now independent and should also now be in allowable condition.

Claim 9, the broadest claim on file dealing with a fastening device has been clarified, and since it includes the features of claim 1 and 2, it should be allowable as well.

As for the dependent claims, claims 4, 5 6, 7 and 14 depend on amended claim 1 and share its allowable features, while claims 10, 11, and 12 depend on claim 9 and share the allowable features of claim 9.

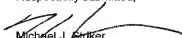
The method claim 13 has been amended to define the corresponding method steps, and it should be considered as being in allowable condition as well.

In view of the above presented remarks and amendments, it is believed that the present application should be considered as allowable and such action is earnestly solicited.

Reconsideration and allowance of the present application is most respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner require or consider it advisable that the specification, claims and/or drawings be further amended or corrected in formal respects in order to place this case in condition for final allowance, then it is respectfully requested that such amendments or corrections be carried out by Examiner's Amendment, and the case be passed to issue. Alternatively, should the Examiner feel that a personal discussion might be helpful in advancing this case to allowance, he is invited to telephone the undersigned (at 631-549-4700).

Respectfully submitted,



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